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# DEPARTMENT OF VISITING NURSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE



IN CHARGE OF  
By MISS LOANE

## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND DISTRICT NURSING \*

By MISS S. LOANE

IN the summer of 1895 I asked Miss Florence Nightingale to read the MS. of an article, "Incidental Opportunities of District Nursing," which subsequently appeared in *NURSING NOTES*. Miss Nightingale was not only kind enough to do this, but she appended the notes given below. Their chief interest lies in the emphasis that she lays on the facts that the district nurse needs to have more complete training than any other nurse, that while maternity work is an essential part of district nursing, the practice of midwifery is almost incompatible with it, and that the district nurse should organize neighborly help, not discourage it, and help to develop family life, not to undermine it.

### THE DISTRICT NURSE

"I have read with the utmost care and with great interest Miss Loane's MS. on the extension of district nursing, and as she asks me to let her know my opinion of it, I will try to do so, provided she will excuse me if my opinion seems more curt than I should wish, and provided I may throw myself upon her kindness to consider that to criticize forty pages is a task that one who has no leisure, but the most pressing work, can hardly undertake with justice to the older claims.

"The first thing a district nurse has to do is to *nurse*. It is the nursing, the giving ease and comfort (physical) to the patients, which gives her influence. They feel their poor bodies relieved by her. But all the preaching inculcated in this MS.—the tone of which is excellent—will be of no avail unless she has that *entrée* to the patients' hearts.

"So far from the nurse standing alone, the ungrudging helpfulness of poor neighbors is the one glorious feature of poor life. As soon as

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\* Reprinted from *Nursing Notes*.

they find that a nurse is there, and what they give will not be spent in drink, there comes in, *e.g.*, a nightgown for the sick and dirty baby, wood and coal for a fire, a kettle full of hot water, a clean blanket, possibly a penn'orth of milk for the sick baby, etc., from the different neighbors.

"It must never be forgotten that the influence of a cultivated woman as district nurse is invaluable for preventing drunkenness. If the father or mother has been seen drunk by the nurse, she will never see him or her in that state again.

"It is very desirable that the nurse should be sent to the patient by the doctor—thus will she get real *nursing* cases—or by a minister of religion, or by the district visitor, etc. But even in these two latter cases there is great danger that the nurse may be sent merely because she will be 'sympathetic,' or will give something, and not because she will *nurse*.

"It is one of the principal duties of a district nurse or of her superintendent to give notice to the sanitary authorities of any defect which the poor people can't remedy. But care must be taken not to set the patient at loggerheads with his landlord. He may be turned out in a place where there is no other room to be had, or cottage.

"It is needless to say that a district nurse must be even a better trained nurse than a hospital nurse, because she has so much less help at hand. There must be nothing of the amateur about her. She has not the doctor always at hand. She has to teach the patient's family to carry out her instructions (we hear much more often of the 'born nurse' than we find her).

"The district nurse must always be under a doctor—nothing else will save her from becoming herself a quack. She must never give money, but she must know the places where things necessary for the patient can be had. This is always easy in London—not so easy in the country.

"And now only to bless Miss Loane on her way, and to regret that I am really so pressed by work that it is impossible to finish these notes as I intended, or to arrange what I have written so badly, I have work which must be done. I think I had better send off this letter as it is, hoping to finish it another day. I am sorry to write so scrappily. But it is unavoidable."